

# The Discipleship Project-Summer 2021

## Series 2: Standing in Liberty

*A Study by John W. Moore*

### Bearing One Another's Burdens

#### Series Big Idea

Because in the flesh no one can live up to the high standard of Old Testament law, we must stand in the liberty and grace of the gospel.

#### Lesson Big Idea

Because in the flesh no one can live up to the high standard of Old Testament law, we must help others carry their burdens and find restoration from their sins.

### FOUNDATION

#### Scripture Focus: Galatians 6:1–2 (PPT)

The weight was almost too much to bear. He could not believe that after making such a bold statement to his Teacher's face, he could bend under the pressure of a few simple accusations. But it had happened; Peter had denied Jesus just like Jesus said he would.

The rooster crowed and Peter ran. He ran until he found a place, all alone, and there he wept bitterly. He cried himself to sleep, unable to move under such a weight of condemnation. He heard the news of Jesus' sentence and dared not go near the hill where He was to be crucified.

After several days of hiding and rehearsing his failures over and over in his mind, Peter was finally able to push himself back into society. All he could do was return to what was familiar to him; he went fishing. However, having been called to preach and spread the gospel to all who would hear, his old lifestyle of fishing was not where he was supposed to be. Perhaps that is why, once again, he fished all night but caught nothing.

The next morning, Peter and his friends noticed a man cooking fish on the shore. The man called out to the fishermen and asked if they had caught anything. He then told them, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some" (John 21:6, NLT). Then Peter knew it was Jesus. Jumping into the water, Peter quickly swam and ran to the Savior.

Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him. Peter looked Jesus in the eyes and said, "Yes, Lord, . . . you know I love you" (John 21:15, NLT). The conversation continued as Jesus began a work of restoration in the heart of the one who would become Pentecost's preacher.

Jesus became the greatest example of the apostle Paul's admonition:

*Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.*  
(Galatians 6:1–2, NLT)

### FRAME

**Building trust is necessary when working to help others carry their burdens.** (PPT) Using discretion is imperative when others are confessing personal matters to you. Many years ago a preacher told the story of a time when he saw a fellow Christian smoking. The preacher was driving down the road and came to a

stop light; he turned and recognized the man in the car next to him. As he reached up to honk his horn to get the man's attention, he saw the man lift his hand to his mouth and take a puff of a cigarette. Shocked by this the preacher stated he did not honk his horn. The light turned green and the other man drove off unaware.

Both men had been in the church for many years and had worked in various ministries. The preacher said his first instinct was to tell their pastor and call out the man. But after a few minutes, his conviction to pray was so overwhelming that he pulled off the road. As he prayed for this man and wept, God laid it on his heart not to say anything but to hold the man up in prayer. A few days later, both men were sitting in the pastor's office to discuss a new ministry in the church. Before the discussion could start, the man began to weep and confessed he had been struggling with his cigarette addiction for some time. The pastor and the preacher did not condemn him but gathered around him and began to pray. In this particular situation, had the preacher gone to his pastor and called out the man on his own, trust may have been lost and a relationship destroyed. Sometimes God reveals things about others to us so we can intercede in prayer, just like Abraham did for Lot.

We should never discuss matters of a private nature openly or with others (Proverbs 17:9; James 4:11). We are not trusted with privileged information for the purpose of spreading it to others. Many lives have been destroyed by loose talking in the church, and this problem still plagues us today. People so often take information they have heard and pass it on, misrepresenting the original dialogue. This treatment only causes the information to become distorted into a complete untruth. When someone shares private information, it should be treated with respect and protected. Only when the information is about someone hurting him- or herself or others should it be revealed, and only then to an authority figure like the pastor.

- **Under what circumstances would it be prudent to reveal something someone has told you in confidence?**

**We cannot forget the grace we have received.** (PPT) Ephesians 4 talks about maturity in the body of Christ. The need to help someone rarely comes at a convenient time. Whenever someone asks for help, how often is it at a time when nothing is going on? When helping someone will be a major inconvenience for us, we tend to find an excuse not to assist, especially if the situation is a product of the individual's poor choice and has created a self-induced crisis. A mature Christian adheres to the words of Jesus in Matthew 7, where He told us not to judge others. Being mature and reserving judgment will allow us to demonstrate the grace our Lord has shown to us time and again.

- **How does grace play a role in helping others with their burdens?**

**Only when we love and forgive one another can we truly be willing to carry each other's burdens.** (PPT) As we stated in last week's lesson, love is the greatest motivator. The Bible also tells us love covers a multitude of sins (I Peter 4:8). Jesus commanded us to love each other as He loves us (John 13:34; 15:12). This is an incredible task, at times, for us humans. Our emotions can dilute our thoughts in a way that is counter to what Jesus told us to do. Love cannot be measured, even though many people try. Forgiveness is the truest test of love as we must let go of whatever animosity we are holding against someone who has brought offence. Once we forgive, we will experience peace not only about what happened, but toward the individual who offended us.

- **How do we know when we have forgiven someone?**

**As humans we can become weary from our efforts in loving and serving others.** (PPT) We must remember to love others when we set out to help them. As mentioned before, the call for help will never come at a convenient time. Phone calls received in the middle of the night never bring good news. In those moments we should call out to God for strength and anointing in order to have the endurance for the task ahead. Whenever we reach out for God, He will pour out His Spirit upon us.

- **What does it mean to do something in love? Does it mean we are happy? Explain.**

**Part of carrying the burdens of others is helping to build up those we seek to assist.** (PPT) This is not achieved with vain words or empty promises. The expression “talk is cheap” resonates whenever we need to build people up after they have fallen. We do not need to add on to the situation by preaching at people about their failures. We should encourage them, not only with words, but also through the action of respect. Affirming people is not the same as condoning their actions. Affirmation should be used to build them up again, reminding them that the journey of life is not about our mistakes but about our resilience and persistence in leaning on God’s grace.

Individuals who have fallen will likely be in the process of self-condemnation and will need us to be the voices of reason. Part of carrying anything is getting our hands dirty. Distancing ourselves from people we sense are having trouble is not what God has called us to do. At times we may need to separate ourselves from someone who is having problems, but that should not be our knee-jerk reaction. Another important step in helping others is the follow-up. Being present in the moment is important, but we should also follow up with individuals. A good deed is only as good as the follow-up.

**No substitute exists for a caring ear that listens.** (PPT) When we hear what someone is saying, we can offer compassion and words that will have more meaning. Clinical chaplains are trained in the “ministry of presence.” Being present does not mean talking. Most hurting people are not interested in our opinion nor are they asking us to solve their problems. Active listening is a skill everyone should seek to employ. In her online article *How to Practice Active Listening*, Arlin Cuncic says active listening involves being neutral and nonjudgmental, having periods of silence, providing verbal and nonverbal feedback to show you are listening (e.g., smiling, eye contact, leaning in, mirroring), asking for clarification, and reflecting back what is being said ([www.verywellmind.com](http://www.verywellmind.com)).

Through active listening we are not trying to figure out how we are going to respond; rather, we are trying to better understand what the person is saying. Often the immediate problem is not all that is going on. In fact, there may be circumstances not immediately evident that will only be revealed through active listening. When we better understand where someone is emotionally, we can be more empathetic. Once we understand the whole situation, we can offer up words of encouragement.

**First John 3:18 says, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth”** (PPT) (KJV). Deeds truly hold more weight than the words we speak. Some say that in a crucial moment, if the words do not come, that is God’s way of saying to be silent.

During a grief class, a man told of losing a child at a young age. When it was time for the funeral, the room was filled to capacity with people from his work and church combined. Sadly, he went on to say the co-workers were more consoling than the church members. He said many of the church members tried to offer various Scriptures or words intended to hold deep meaning. It made him outraged to the point of wanting to scream.

At times, words are simply not needed. Instead, we must “be” the Word to the people to whom we are ministering. God’s Spirit can speak to and console the hurting through someone who chooses to love in silence. Our actions speak a lot louder than our words.

Remember once again that Ecclesiastes 3:1 tells us, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (KJV). There is a time to keep silent and a time to speak. The man in the grief class went on to say a hug or a tightly grasped hand in that moment held more gravity than mere words.

- **Can you name an action that would be more powerful than words?**

## FINISH

An old fable about long spoons will help illustrate how working together will help us endure the trials of life.

## MANUSCRIPT

Two groups of people were shipwrecked on two separate deserted islands. Part of the cargo they were able to recover contained some enormous spoons. These spoons were not the kind you would find on a dinner table somewhere; these were very long—so long people could not feed themselves with them. As the days went by, people became ill because of eating with dirty hands. There was no practical use for the spoons, only the resentment these defective utensils had managed to survive the wreckage.

The members of the first group began to work closely together, discovering that each person in the group had a different ability that proved useful to everyone's survival and quality of life. The second group constantly fought among themselves, being critical about any idea someone would offer. One day someone in the first group saw a lady who was too sick to feed herself. He took one of the long spoons and began to feed her. The others quickly caught on and realized they could use the spoons to feed each other in a more sanitary fashion. After a few days, the sickness in the first group began to dissipate. Unfortunately, the people in the second group never worked together, and they slowly began to die off until no one was left alive. The first group grew stronger and began to thrive until one day they were rescued from the island and taken home.

This story illustrates how working together and bearing each other's burdens builds the group up and the group thrives. When we fail to work together and we isolate ourselves, the group will deteriorate and wither away. We are on this planet—like the first group was on the island—working together and lifting each other up until our rescue. Paul said it best, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2, KJV).